DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 406 770 EC 305 463

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TITLE Using Cases and Case Methods in Teacher Preparation and Deafness.
PUB DATE Mar 97
NOTE 8p.; In: Windows - 97 on the New Standards. Monograph of Collected Papers from the Annual Conference of the Association of College Educators - Deaf and Hard of Hearing (23rd, Santa Fe, NM, March 7-10, 1997); see EC 305 461.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Case Studies; *Critical Incidents Method; Deafness; Decision Making; *Hearing Impairments; Higher Education; Partial Hearing; *Preservice Teacher Education; Special Education Teachers; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Case Method (Teaching Technique)

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development and use of case studies in the preservice education of teachers of the deaf and hard-of-hearing. It describes the guidelines for selecting decision-based cases, which were judged the most appropriate for instruction of prospective teachers. The selection of cases focused on choosing a critical incident, describing the context in which the incident occurred, identifying the players, and reviewing the incident and the players' response to the incident. Critical incidents explored in the six cases include parental choice of communication modality, miscommunication between a teacher of the deaf and a regular classroom teacher, lack of administrative support for a student's self-esteem needs, and a parent's quest for an educational interpreter. (Contains 13 references.) (DB)

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Using Cases and Case Methods in Teacher Preparation and Deafness

by

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Case studies have long been utilized in law, medicine, business and medical education pedagogy to facilitate students' problem-solving abilities and to provide authentic situations in which emerging professionals can apply and synthesize their learnings (Carter & Unklesbay, 1989). The reform of teacher education as evidenced in numerous national reports including the Holmes Group (1990), and the Association of Teacher Educators (1991) asserts the need for teacher preparation programs to consider strategies by which prospective teachers can gain expertise in analyzing and interpreting novel contexts in which they will teach. Prior to these initiatives, authors such as Shulman (1986), introduced the "knowledge of specific, well-documented, and richly described events" (L. Shulman, 1986, p. 11) as means by which prospective teachers can become more appropriately prepared to meet the ambiguities and complexities posed by teaching in the late 20th and into the 21st century. Consequently, the use of cases in education serves as a viable means of preparing pre-service teachers for the vagaries of "the real classroom world" (Kennedy, 1990).

Cases in education embody a personalized account in a short-story narrative of a real-life situation or event that incorporates a rich description of the context, participants, and reality of a critical incident that are edited to provide data for consideration and discussion. Cases may be categorized as exemplars, stimuli to analyze and contemplate action, or opportunities to generate personal reflection (Merseth, 1996). In exemplar cases, classroom vignettes that delineate models of best practices, or a general pattern of practice are described. In decision-based or dilemma cases, a problem is framed from which a teacher must take action or formulate and realize a decision based on analysis of the circumstances. Cases emphasizing personal

reflection create opportunities for prospective teachers to integrate experience with self and external knowledge in formulating personal perspectives concerning a situation.

A rich corpus of cases in regular education have been developed by various writers such as Shulman and Mesa-Bains (1990) and Silverman, Welty and Lyon (1992). Cases have also been published by Allyn and Bacon as well as the Harvard Graduate School of Education (1994). The Case Research Journal offers a source for cases and research incorporating decision-based cases for pre-service public school personnel. Thus, it is apparent that cases and case methods of instruction are widely used in teacher preparation curricula in regular education. However, only one published case by Pitton in Cooper (1995) addresses deafness. In this case, a regular education speech communication teacher confronts her feelings about using an educational interpreter for a deaf student to complete a public speaking assignment.

As the roles of teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students emerge from the self-contained classroom to those of consultant and co-teacher to second-language and bi-cultural expert, faculty in teacher preparation programs face immense challenges as changing national competency and program standards demand. In order to meet such requirements, we posit that prospective teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students could benefit from the use of cases and case methods in constructivist teacher preparation curricula. The paucity of specific cases in deafness in which students can examine critical incidents related to teaching deaf and hard of hearing students creates opportunities to adapt available cases and to write decision-based cases concerning issues in deafness that can be useful in both regular and deafness teacher preparation curricula.

The authors have used six cases from the corpus of cases developed by Silverman, Welty and Lyon (1992), in two deafness methods courses. Although these cases did not emphasize deafness-related issues, they focused on mainstreaming, diversity, behavior management, and parental support issues that are germane to any teaching experience. The decision-based cases were selected and compiled in a custom-published format with a teaching notes booklet for instructor use. The teaching notes outlined questions for discussion which were augmented by instructor-devised questions related to deafness. Following an hour discussion period of each case during which the instructor asked open-ended and focusing questions and recorded students' comments on the board, students wrote their cognitive and affective perceptions of the case. The students also included their comments concerning their evaluation of the read-discuss-write format. These comments were positive, which has furthered our interest in developing cases of our own. We determined that decision-based cases were most appropriate for our prospective teachers in that they present a dilemma or problem which must be faced by a teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students who must use available information to reach a solution to a problem in a "thinking on your feet" fashion. These types of cases offer a productive contextual framework which serves to stimulate the exchange of multiple perspectives from which to view a problematic event or situation (Doyle, 1990; Shulman, 1992).

In writing decision-bases deafness-related cases, we are following the guidelines outlined by Welty and Silverman (n.d.) which focus on choosing a critical incident, describing the context in which the incident occurs, identifying the players, and reviewing the incident and the response the players had to the incident. As we develop

our cases, we are engaging in a discussion of the incidents, the amount of information we wish to present, and the perspective from whom the story is recounted. The cases we are writing have emerged from our sharing diverse experiences in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Thus, we are reflecting on our own courses of action which constitute intensely personal contemplations.

Critical incidents we are exploring include: parental choice of communication modality, miscommunication between a teacher of the deaf and regular classroom teacher, lack of administrative support for a student's self-esteem needs, and a parent's quest for an educational interpreter. In selecting these critical incidents we have outlined the uncertainty of the situations and examined their emotional power in engaging prospective teachers. For example, in ***Joanie Bryant and Nanette Rogers***, a first year resource teacher of deaf students (Joanie), attempts to coordinate lessons with a fourth grade veteran social studies teacher (Nanette). Joanie has spent a week in preparing lessons concerning transportation for a deaf student in Nanette's class. As she walks into the workroom on Monday morning, Nanette greets Joanie with the news that she has decided to teach a unit on natural resources that she will begin that very morning. Nanette vociferously states she resents having to tell Joanie in advance what she plans to teach; while Joanie hides her frustration and feelings of inadequacy in being able to help her student. In discussing this incident, issues concerning mainstreaming, collaboration, organizational climate, and teaching strategies surface.

We have found that the use of cases, case methods of instruction, and the writing of cases has engendered collaboration with colleagues as well as our students as

we deepen our understanding of the process of becoming and continuing to grow as teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students.

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